



Are the Devils Chained?

By

Ustâdh Muhammad Muhsin Dhiyâb

Translation by The Imam Rassi Society

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Translation of the article entitled: *Hal Tufsidu Shayâtîn?* from the Arabic magazine *Thaqâfatunâ* Issue 2.

It is reported on the authority of Abu Hurayra that the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him and his progeny, said: ((When Ramadan comes, the gates of Paradise are opened, the gates of Hellfire are closed, and the devils are chained)).

There's no doubt that many of us have heard this *hadîth*, specifically during the month of Ramadan in which the Islamic Community is in a rush to greet. However...? The most amazing thing is that which we hear from many scholars regarding their understanding of this *hadîth*! It is not consistent with the mind or logic. This is because the way they interpret the devils being chained, the gates of Paradise being opened, and the gates of Hellfire being closed, is not the intended meaning of the noble *hadîth*. They have taken the Prophetic utterance, which is beautiful in its conveyance, at face value.

However, the reality is that it is textual imagery that seeks to bring together a structural induction of inciting, commanding, and other than that. If that was the case, what is the value of increasing the reward of worshipper and the one who fasts during Ramadan? Verily, if humankind is with Allah in these acts of worship outside of the month of Ramadan while the devils are present, it would more likely be considered a greater reward.

We should consider looking at this Prophetic utterance with deeper insight. We will find that the utterance begins with the conditional clause "When". The answer to the condition is that all verbs are in the passive participle tense. In other words, the action is named but not the doer.

If we consider that well, we will find that what is really intended is that the doer is the believer him/herself.

The meaning is: When Ramadan comes, they [i.e. the believers] "chain the devils" by means of their repentance and struggle in acts of worship, they "open the gates of Paradise" by their good deeds, and they "close the gates of Hellfire" by suppressing their inner desires and corrupt passions.

This is proven by another utterance in which the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him and his progeny, is recorded to have said: ((They constrict the paths to Satan)) or similar to that.

If we are presented with verbs that are in the passive participle tense, it is a rhetorical device of deep significance that confirms that we are concerned with actions.

Verily, we see that some people practice many evil deeds before the month and commit even more evil deeds during the month! How can we explain this?!

Some scholars explain this by saying that the soul had taken control of the individual in reality during Ramadan. However, we say that they have no proof for this. It is only assumption, and {Assumption does not prevail over truth one bit} (Q. 10:36). The soul has its influence at any time.

Some have sought to escape this predicament by saying that Allah has not chained up all of the devils—only the major ones. The minor ones still remain. This explanation is stranger than the first one because they have no decisive proof for it.

Finally, we must recognize that we have freewill, our own desires, as well as the ability to direct our own actions—whether human or jinn. What we are confronted with, we are in control of it—whether it be during Ramadan or otherwise.

The Qur'ân makes it clear to us that there are worshippers that Satan has no ability over—no matter what state or time he comes to them in. Why? It is because they are the most sincere of the sincere.

The intended meaning of what the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him and his progeny, said is that this blessed month should be when one exhausts the most effort regarding one's soul and the place where the human scrutinizes and tests oneself by means of self-control from the inside by struggling against the self and outside by avoiding the designs of the devils and outward temptations.

Let us attempt to refer any noble prophetic council back to the Qur'ân to make it clear to us what is meant.

And Allah knows best!